

Missouri State Archives

Finding Aid [998.253]

MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

Governor Elliott Woolfolk Major Collection

Abstract: Correspondence, newspaper clippings, family history, and photographs concerning Missouri Governor Elliott Woolfolk Major (1913-1917) and his family.

Extent: About 1/5 cubic feet

Physical Description: Paper; Photographs; Negatives; Microfilm

Location: Missouri State Archives; Stacks

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Alternative Formats: TIFs of photographs

Access Restrictions: None

Publication Restrictions: Standard copyright rules apply

Preferred Citation: [item description], [date]; *Governor Elliott Woolfolk Major Collection*, Record Group 998.253; Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City.

Acquisition Information: Gifts with deeds; Accession #1997-0080; #1998-0144; #2000-0082

Processing Information: Processing completed by EW on 05/18/2018. Updated by EW on 03/23/2021.

HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Quoted directly from finding aid 3.33:

“Elliott Woolfolk Major was born on October 24, 1864 in Edgewood, Lincoln County, Missouri to James Reed Major and Sarah Ann Taylor Woolfolk. He attended public schools in Pike County and the Watson Seminary in Ashley. He married Elizabeth Terrill Myers in Bowling Green, Missouri on June 14, 1887 and the couple raised three children.

“Major began work as a teacher in 1884 but left to study law with James Beauchamp Clark in Bowling Green. He was admitted to the Missouri Bar in 1885. Major served as law clerk for Clark in the Missouri legislature in 1889 and was briefly a partner in the Clark law firm. He established a reputation as a trial lawyer and became interested in politics. Major was elected in 1896 to the Missouri Senate from the 11th District and served through 1899 when he became editor of the *Revised Statutes of Missouri*. In 1908, Major was elected attorney general. He argued more than a thousand cases before the Missouri Supreme Court and took 52 cases to the United States Supreme Court. One successful decision upheld Missouri’s maximum railroad freight-rate laws. Of particular importance, the U. S. Supreme Court unanimously upheld Missouri’s law in the state suit against Standard Oil Company.

“Major defeated John C. McKinley in the 1912 gubernatorial election and was sworn in as Missouri’s 33rd governor on January 13, 1913. Major personally read his biennial messages to the General Assembly, the first governor to do so. During his administration, the Missouri legislature ratified the 17th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution in 1913. The first senator directly elected to the U. S. Senate by Missourians was William Joel Stone in 1914. Use of the referendum as a legislative process was tested in 1914 when four measures were voted on by the general public (they all failed).

“A primary accomplishment of the Major administration included the creation in 1913 of the Public Service Commission in order to regulate rates charged by the utility companies. Also during the Major administration, the Pardon and Parole Board was established, and Missouri’s first comprehensive securities act was passed to supervise corporations operating in the state. Missouri road improvement interested Major and in 1913 and 1914 (Good Road Days) he worked alongside volunteers to construct nearly 400 miles of roads; and also, the state highway department was established. On March 22, 1913, the governor approved the adoption of a state flag designed by Marie Watkins Oliver of Cape Girardeau. Designated for the first Monday in October, Missouri Day was approved on March 22, 1915. The governor refused to raise taxes throughout his term and combined with overspending, the state was \$2.5 million in debt when the governor’s term expired.

“When his term ended in 1917, Major opened a law office in St. Louis, continuing his legal career until he retired in 1945. He remained active in civic affairs and maintained memberships in the American, Missouri, and St. Louis Bar Associations along with the Odd Fellows, the Elks, and the Masonic Lodge. Governor Major died on July 9, 1949 in Eureka, St. Louis County and is interred in City Cemetery in Bowling Green, Missouri.”

NOTE: His name is often written as Elliot instead of Elliott, but the personal correspondence, other records in this collection and his gravestone all spell it with two ts.

ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

Related Collections

RG3.33 Elliot Woolfolk Major, 1913-1917

Additional External Resources

The Missouri History Museum in St. Louis holds the following collection: [#A1163 Joseph O'Reilly Papers, 1779-1945](#).

The State Historical Society of Missouri in Columbia holds the following collection: [#C4039 Elliott W. Major Papers, 1860s-1950](#).

NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS AND CORRESPONDENCE, 1842-2000

Arrangement: Chronological

Scope and Content

This series contains newspaper clippings and letters concerning the Major family. The original letters were donated by Bob and Betty Ross, the photocopies by Bob Brown.

Container List

Location	Box	Folder	Contents	Date
	66	7	Newspaper clippings	1898-1992

Original Letters:

	66	8	Letter from Ann Mary Givens to her sister Sarah T. Woolfolk	07/06/1842
	66	8	Letter from John Sutton Woolfolk to his mother Sarah T. Woolfolk	11/20/1850
	66	8	Letter from US Speaker of the House "Champ" Clark to Elliott Major, Jr. about Elliott's appendicitis	06/21/1913
	66	8	Letter of recommendation for Elliott Major, Jr. from Gov. Frederick D. Gardner	10/09/1918
	66	8	Letter of recommendation for Elliott Major, Jr. from US Speaker of the House "Champ" Clark	10/10/1918
	66	8	Letter from Richard L. Goode of Washington University to Elliott W. Major confirming that he was a law student at the school and welcoming back after his Navy service	11/18/1918
	66	8	Letter from Elliott W. Major, Sr. to Elliott Major, Jr.	05/28/1921
	66	8	Letter from Elizabeth Major to her son Elliott Major, Jr.	11/08/1921
	66	8	Letter from Elizabeth Major to her son Elliott Major, Jr.	11/14/1921
	66	8	Letter from Elizabeth Major to her son Elliott Major, Jr.	11/26/1921
	66	8	Letter from Elizabeth Major to her son Elliott Major, Jr.	10/18/1923
	66	8	Letter from Elizabeth Major to her son Elliott Major, Jr.	11/28/1923
	66	8	Letter from Elizabeth Major to her son Elliott Major, Jr.	11/12/1924
	66	8	Letter from Elliott W. Major, Sr. to Elliott Major, Jr. and his wife Estelle	11/16/1942
	66	8	Letter to Pattie from Estelle Major (wife of Elliott Major, Jr.)	11/10/1971
	66	8	Letter to Elliott Major, Sr. from his sister Elizabeth "Linsy"	(no date)
	66	8	Letter from Elizabeth Major to her son Elliott Major, Jr.	(no date)
	66	8	Letter from Elizabeth Major to her son Elliott Major, Jr.	(no date)

Photocopies of letters:

	66	9	Photocopies of letters and a list of items donated by Bob Brown to MS253	1850-2000
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SPEECHES, 1911-1924

Arrangement: Chronological

Scope and Content

These are photocopies of speeches given by Governor Elliott W. Major.

Container List

Location	Box	Folder	Contents	Date
	66	10	The Memories of a Day	03/11/1911
	66	10	Memorial Address: Life, Character and Achievements of the Late Senator John Tyler Morgan of Alabama	1913
			Speech at the Panama Pacific Exposition in San Francisco, CA	05/05/1915
	66	10	On the Laying of the Cornerstone of the New Capitol Building	06/24/1915
	66	10	Dedicating the New Capitol Building	10/06/1924
	66	10	Memories of a Day in the Log Cabin Period	(no date)

MAJOR FAMILY HISTORY, 1998

Arrangement: N/a

Scope and Content

This is a photocopy of Major's [sic] and Their Descendants by Bob Brown. It includes family charts, captions for photocopies of photographs and a lineage.

Container List

Location	Box	Folder	Contents	Date
	66	11	<u>Major's and Their Descendants</u>	July 1998

MISCELLANEA, 1909-1933

Arrangement: Chronological

Scope and Content

These are photocopies of various records concerning Elliott Major and his family.

Container List

Location	Box	Folder	Contents	Date
	66	12	Certificate of Election for Elliott W. Major to the position of Attorney General of Missouri	01/09/1909
	66	12	Funeral Notice for Mrs. Sarah A. Major, dod 09/08/1911	Sept. 1911
	66	12	Certificate of Election for Elliott W. Major to the position of Governor of Missouri	01/10/1913
	66	12	HB 329 An Act to Provide for an Official Flag for the State of Missouri and to Provide a Design for the Same, introduced by Mrs. Oliver 01/21/1913	01/21/1913
	66	12	An article "'Dixie' at the Exposition" by Miss L. Louisiana Ransom from <u>Confederate Veteran</u> Vol. XXIII p. 348 that mentions Gov. Major	Aug. 1915
	66	12	Invitation to Elliott W. Major to become a lifetime member of the Congressional Country Club in Washington, DC	1929-1933

PHOTOGRAPHS, c1900-1994

Arrangement: By series, then original order maintained

Scope and Content

Series 1: The first two images are small collodion prints of Elliott, Jr. who appears to be about two years old. The rest of the images are later prints and are undated. Some captions were obtained from Bob Brown's family history (see Folder 11).

Series 2: These are modern 5x7 copy prints of older photographs and one 3x5 original.

Series 3: In 2000, Bob Brown and Elizabeth Roetter Driemeyer loaned the Archives a scrapbook that belonged to Elizabeth "Lindy" (Major) Roetter, daughter of Governor Major. The scrapbook was microfilmed (see next Series), but copies of select photographs were also made. This series contains those copy prints and matching copy negatives.

All photographs have been digitized and are in the Reference Room on Manuscript DVD #1.

Container List

Series 1: Original photographs donated by Bob and Betty Ross

Location	Box	Folder	Contents	Date
	66	13A	Young Elliott Major, Jr. (2 copies)	c1900
	66	13B	Young Elliott Major, Jr.	c1900
	66	13C	L to R: Estelle Major, Elliott Major, Jr., and Elizabeth "Lindy" (Major) Roetter	(no date)
	66	13D	Elizabeth (Myers) Major's birthplace, an estate called "Cloverdale" in Aberdeen, Pike County, MO	(no date)
	66	13E	Elizabeth (Myers) Major's birthplace, an estate called "Cloverdale" in Aberdeen, Pike County, MO	(no date)
	66	13F	Elizabeth (Major) Roetter outside Elliott Jr. and Estelle's house in Shawnee, KS	(no date)
	66	13G	L to R: unknown, Elliott Major, Sr., and Elliott Major, Jr.	(no date)

Series 2: Copy prints donated by Bob Brown

Location	Box	Folder	Contents	Date
	66	14A	Governor Major on a horse during a procession for the dedication of the Jefferson Memorial Building in St. Louis. Photo by Auch [?] Studio, St. Louis.	04/30/1913
	66	14B	James and Sarah Major (Elliott Major, Sr.'s parents) at their home in Bowling Green	pre-1911
	66	14C	Governor Elliott Major, his wife Elizabeth, and an unidentified man with two horses, a buggy, and luggage; Governor's Mansion	1913-1917
	66	14D	Governor Elliott Major, his wife Elizabeth, an unidentified man, buggy, and luggage; Governor's Mansion	1913-1917
	66	14E	James and Sarah Major (Elliott's parents)	pre-1911

	66	14F	L to R: Eugene or James Major, Jr., Edward Major, Elliott Major, Sr., and Samuel "Bud" Major (seated)	n.d.
	66	14G	Governor Elliott Major and First Lady Elizabeth Major who is holding a shovel at the Capitol Building groundbreaking. (See also Image 37 below.)	05/06/1913
	66	14H	Headstones for Elliott W. Major (1864-1949) and Elizabeth Myers Major (1869-1941) in Bowling Green City Cemetery	08/20/1994

Series 3: Scrapbook Copy Photographs (numbers in the Contents field refer to the scrapbook page and image number; see next series for additional scrapbook information)

Location	Box	Folder	Contents	Date
	213	24	#1-1: Portrait of Elliott Woolfolk Major, likely taken before he was Governor	pre-1913
	213	25	#1-2: Portrait of James Reed Major (1825-1921), father of Elliott W. Major, taken on his 88 th birthday.	05/05/1913
	213	26	#1-3: Portrait of Sarah (Woolfolk) Major (1835-1911), mother of Elliott W. Major	c1908
	213	27	#3-1: 410 Monroe St., Jefferson City, home of the Major family when he was Attorney General.	1908-1912
	213	28	#3-2: Oval photograph of Elizabeth "Lindy" Major, Elliott's daughter	c1910
	213	29	#22-1: Close-up view from the lawn of the main entrance to the Missouri Governor's Mansion	1913-1916
	213	30	#22-2: Image of a fountain on the grounds of the Missouri Governor's Mansion; it is in the shape of a heron or crane spouting water from a basin.	1913-1916
	213	31	#23-1: The Governors' car for incoming Governor Elliott Woolfolk Major's inauguration. Outgoing Governor Hadley sits in the front. In the back seat are Mrs. Hadley, Mrs. Major, and incoming Governor Major.	01/13/1913
	213	32	#33-1: Gov. Major throws out the first pitch at the first-ever St. Louis Terriers baseball game. The Terriers played in Handlan's Park from 1914-1915 and were part of the short-lived "outlaw" baseball league called the Federal League. Their opponents in this game were the Indianapolis Hoosiers. The Terriers lost 3 to 7.	04/16/1914
	213	33	#33-2: Gov. Major (right) is in the stands at a St. Louis Terriers baseball game. The Terriers played in Handlan's Park from 1914-1915 and were part of the short-lived "outlaw" baseball league called the Federal League. Their opponents in this game were the Indianapolis Hoosiers. The Terriers lost 3 to 7. Photo by Geo. Retzeker.	04/16/1914
	213	34	#36-1: Gov. Major poses on the lawn of the Governor's Mansion with a golf club.	July 1915
	213	35	#36-2: Gov. Major practices putting on the lawn of the Governor's Mansion with a golf club. The heron or crane fountain is nearby.	July 1915
	213	36	#36-3: Gov. Major practices putting on the lawn of the Governor's Mansion with a golf club.	July 1915

	213	37	#40-1: Gov. and Mrs. Major pose with a shovel during the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Capitol Building. (See also Image 14G above.)	05/06/1913
	213	38	#46-1: Gov. Major poses outside the Governor's Mansion. Three women are visible on the steps behind him.	1913-1916
	213	39	#46-2: Gov. Major (standing on back of tractor, left) and others are volunteering to work for the Governor's Good Roads Initiative. They are at work on the road from Columbia to Jefferson City. Photo by Underwood & Underwood.	08/21/1913
	213	40	#46-3: Gov. Major (left) and Kansas Governor George Hodges are helping to build a road as part of the Governor's Good Roads Initiative. They are at work on the road from Columbia to Jefferson City.	08/21/1913
	213	41	#51-1: Exterior view of the Missouri Building at the San Francisco World's Fair. Photo by Cardinell-Vincent Co.	1915
	213	42	#52-1: Interior of the main lobby of the Missouri Building at the San Francisco World's Fair. Photo by Cardinell-Vincent Co.	1915
	213	43	#54-1: Gov. Major is attending a banquet in a hotel with a rustic-looking balcony running the length of the banquet room. That year he visited California and Colorado.	c1915
	213	44	#55-1: Exterior view of the new two-story west side screened-in porch of the Missouri Governor's Mansion.	1915
	213	45	#56-1: Gov. Major takes flight in a hot air balloon from St. Louis to Columbia, IL. L to R: Pilot William F. Assmann, Albert von Hoffmann, Horace F. Rumsey, and Major. Photo by J.D. Wooster Lambert.	10/21/1915
	213	46	#57-1: Gov. Major stands at the sidelines of the University of Missouri football field for the Missouri-Kansas Thanksgiving Day football game in Columbia.	11/25/1915
	213	47	#61-1: Gov. Major (left) stands outside a building with stained glass reading "St. John's 1741" with Kentucky Governor A.D. Stanley. Major is in Louisville, KY to make an address at the Kentucky State Fair.	09/12/1916
	213	48	#62-1: Gov. Major signs a copy of his final address to the General Assembly while other officials stand and watch. This is the first official act to take place inside the new Capitol Building. It is in the not-quite-finished Governor's Office.	01/02/1917
	213	49	#66-1: Gov. Major's daughter Elizabeth "Lindy" Major stands outside in their yard. The caption gives her birthdate as July 17, 1900 in Bowling Green, MO. She looks about 4 or 5 years old.	c1904-1905
	213	50	#66-2: Lindy Major's elementary school class, "2 nd Room," Bowling Green, MO.	c1907-8
	213	51	#67-1: Front view of 410 Monroe St. in Jefferson City, home of the Major family when he was Attorney General. A woman sits in a rocking chair on the ivy-covered front porch.	1908-1912

	213	52	#67-2: Elliott Major, Jr. and Lindy Major pose in front of a gazebo with their dogs Mike and Jeff (short for Jefferson Davis). Image taken shortly after the family moved to the Governor's Mansion.	1913
	213	53	#67-3: Gov. Major sits on the Mansion lawn with his son's dog Jeff (short for Jefferson Davis).	1913-1916
	213	54	#89-1: Family portrait of Bill Roetter, 2-year-old Elizabeth Jane Roetter, and Lindy (Major) Roetter (Gov. Major's daughter).	1926
	213	55	#91-1: Former Governor Elliott Major poses outside with his young granddaughter Elizabeth Jane Roetter, born January 22, 1924.	1925-1926
	213	56	#94-1: Two young kids pose outside next to Charles Lindbergh's plane the Spirit of St. Louis.	Winter 1927-1928
	213	57	#103-1 (actually on p. 102): Former Governor Elliott Major sits at his desk opposite a woman in his law offices in St. Louis.	1930s

SCRAPBOOK, 1908-1955

Arrangement: N/a

Scope and Content

A 110-page scrapbook containing newspaper clippings, original letters, and photographs was loaned to the Archives for microfilming. Contents primarily cover Missouri Governor Elliott Woolfolk Major and his family, particularly his daughter Elizabeth “Lindy” (Major) Roetter who made the scrapbook. It is arranged in rough chronological order.

Newspaper clippings concern Major’s term as Attorney General and Governor. About two-thirds of the book is on Gov. Major. The other third follows Lindy and her time at Lindenwood College and later her marriage and daughter.

Several of the photographs from the scrapbook have been copied and are in the Photographs series above.

Container List

Location	Reel #	Contents	Date
Microfilm Room	M371	35mm microfilm of the Lindy (Major) Roetter scrapbook.	1908-1955